



Climate change and US interests

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Abstract:

The climate change debate in the United States has now moved beyond arguments about whether climate change is real and man-made to focus on what the country should do about the threat. This Essay takes on and debunks the "climate change winner" argument. That argument asserts that the United States is likely to fare well in a warmer world, at least compared to most other states, and therefore should invest less, rather than more, in mitigation efforts. We explain that existing estimates of the impact of climate change on the United States systematically understate the likely economic impact of climate change, and we provide rough estimates of what a more complete accounting would reveal. Existing estimates fail to account for a variety of the costs that climate change will impose, and ignore the ways in which climate change impacts abroad are likely to spill over into the United States. By looking more carefully at these omitted costs, this Essay shows that the United States, acting in its own self-interest, should try to combat climate change. A more complete accounting of the costs reveals that the United States would be better off paying the full cost of climate change mitigation (if doing so were possible) rather than allowing the world to continue in a "business as usual" fashion. This conclusion is even stronger if Europe and perhaps the rest of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are assumed to shoulder some of the costs. The point is not that the United States or the OECD should actually bear these costs alone, or even that it would be possible to do so, but rather that there is a strong case for action by the United States even if some countries refuse to cooperate. This Essay shows that the United States has reason to take prompt and aggressive action to address climate change, not out of benevolence or guilt, but out of self-interest.

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Resource Description

Climate Scenario :

specification of climate scenario (set of assumptions about future states related to climate)

Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES)

Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES) Scenario: SRES A1, SRES A2, SRES B1, SRES B2

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change;
surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

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A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Ecosystem Changes, Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Security, Food/Water Security, Human Conflict/Displacement, Human Conflict/Displacement, Precipitation, Sea Level Rise, Temperature, Unspecified Exposure

Extreme Weather Event: Drought, Flooding, Hurricanes/Cyclones

Food/Water Security: Food Access/Distribution

Temperature: Extreme Heat, Fluctuations

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Infectious Disease, Morbidity/Mortality

Infectious Disease: Airborne Disease, General Infectious Disease, Vectorborne Disease, Zoonotic Disease

Airborne Disease: Coccidioidomycosis (Valley Fever), Influenza

Vectorborne Disease: Mosquito-borne Disease, Tick-borne Disease

Mosquito-borne Disease: Malaria, West Nile Virus

Tick-borne Disease: Lyme Disease

Zoonotic Disease: Other Zoonotic Disease

Zoonotic Disease (other): Rift Valley Fever; Monkeypox

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation, Mitigation

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Model/Methodology:

type of model used or methodology development is a focus of resource

Cost/Economic, Exposure Change Prediction, Methodology

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion, Research Article, Review

Timescale:

time period studied

Medium-Term (10-50 years)